



# Car Washing in Greenville County



Greenville County Land Development Division

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For more information about stormwater and  
water quality please visit Greenville County's  
website at [www.greenvillecounty.org](http://www.greenvillecounty.org)



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## Did you know?

Non point source pollution is the leading cause of water pollution. It occurs when rainfall flows over land and picks up any natural or man made pollutants and discharges them into streams and lakes. Non point source pollution is mostly associated with rainfall runoff, but it is important to understand that other forms of runoff, such as car wash runoff, affect water quality too.

Washing a car in your driveway or public parking lot can impact the quality of local streams and lakes. All of the wash water that goes into the drains from these activities is directly discharged into streams and lakes UNTREATED! Not only is the detergent going into the water system, but so are the other pollutants it picks up along the way such as oils and grease, sediment, and heavy metals.



## Why it's a problem

The runoff from car washing may contain pollutants such as rust from the car, oils and grease, detergents, and particulate matter. If the water drains into the storm drain, all of these are going directly into the creeks and streams. Harmful effects associated with each pollutant are listed below:

**Heavy metals from rust:** Heavy metals have a toxic effect on aquatic life and have the potential to bioaccumulate through the food chain.

**Oils and Grease:** Oils and grease smother aquatic animals and prevent the transfer of oxygen to the water.

**Detergents:** Detergents may contain phosphorus, which contributes to algae growth. Excessive algae growths deprive fish and plants of oxygen they need for survival.

**Particulate Matter:** Particulate matter has a harmful effect on aquatic life by blocking light from getting to organisms, increases sedimentations, and carries other pollutants attached to them and deposits them in creeks, streams, and other water bodies.



## What can you do?

Here are some tips to help prevent water pollution from car washing activities:

- Use a commercial car wash. They use less water and send the discharge water to be treated.
- Wash your car on a pervious surface, such as a lawn or gravel area. This helps filter the detergent, oils and grease, particulate matter and other pollutants out of the water. If this is not possible at least direct the runoff to a grassy or gravel area.
- Use low or no phosphate detergent. Phosphate in the water has a harmful effect on the fish and the aquatic ecosystem. Look for detergents that are labeled non-toxic, chlorine-free, phosphate free, or biodegradable.
- Use an automatic shut off nozzle to help conserve water.

